20:Ominde I-5 (ca. 1948) 1952
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raised against such raiders. It is considered a disgrace to be discovered as an accomplice in raids on the girls' sleeping quarters.

On attaining Maturity

The attainment of maturity among girls is marked by the first onset of menstruation. In the past this was kept very secret until several periods had been experienced, and even now its first occurrence is kept secret. Formerly, early preparations were made for it by instructing the girls about the physical changes involved.

The information regarding this important physiological happening used to be given by the old woman in whose hut the girls slept. At present the information is obtained largely from experienced women with whom the girls associate. In the past there was no initiation ceremony to celebrate the event, and today the position remains the same. Although the betrothal of a girl could take place as early as ten, the social attitude was and still is that girls should not be handed over to their husbands before attaining maturity. Even when the mutual handing over took place before this age, the girl was obliged to live in the home of some older woman until the advent of menstruation. It is still believed that premature marriage results in great weakness to the girl.

The social position of a girl on reaching maturity. The social position of the newly-mature girl is vague and uncertain. Any abnormality of mind, character or body, is a source of anxiety to her family. Moreover, as most girls marry between sixteen and eighteen, there is a tendency for ill-wishers to over-state the ages of girls above that limit, because the attitude of society towards them is similar to that adopted towards overdue goods. Those who fail to marry at an early age thus become subjects of scorn. So strong is the pressure exerted by

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this attitude that unmarried girls, as they grow older, are often forced to marry in the end by taking advantage of the institution of polygamy, which acts as a final method of absorption. Although she may live to an advanced age, a single girl is continually tormented by the fact that society does not approve of unmarried girls.

Restrictions. Traditionally, a mature girl is not allowed to enter her father's or her mother's sleeping place, especially if the mother is still giving birth to children. This restriction, although generally ignored by Christians, applies also to the wives of her uncles. Those who are her parents or parents by marriage do not go where a girl receives her male visitors. By custom this hut was built beyond view of the parents' huts and served as a sleeping place for boys. It is considered that a girl who has commenced associating with men should not enter her mother's or father's hut because she would interfere with their powers of reproduction.

Relationship with brothers. The fear of incest has led to the practice of keeping young women's activities as separate as possible from those of their brothers, but free association and conversation concerning their mutual interests generally takes place, since brothers and sisters retain an interest in each others' love affairs. From his sisters, a young man may be informed of things he wishes to know about his girl friend.

Pre-marital pregnancy. Cases of pre-marital pregnancy were very rare in the past, according to most of my informants. But this rarity was not due to the fact that sexual relationships were prohibited. Pregnancy among mature girls was apparently not infrequent from any strict moral code, but from the conscious effort of the girls themselves to guard against it. Because much importance was attached to virginity, it was a matter of personal pride and was carefully guarded. It was a great honour and a